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B1, 1.4(D)PAGE 01 CARACA 10267 01 OF 02 252055Z
ACTION ARA-01INFO LOG-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 DS-00 HA-09 INRE-00 INR-01
ADS-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 PM-01 P-01 SCT-03 SP-01
SSO-00 SS-01 ASDS-01 /019W

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O 252053Z SEP 92
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4203
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 10267

NOFORN

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: ASEC, PHUM, PGOV, VE
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THE RIOS SHOOTINGREF: A) CARACAS 10159
B) CARACAS 10239

1. S/NOFORN - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: THE GOV MAY BENEFIT, IN THE VERY SHORT TERM,
FROM THE POLITICAL EFFECTS OF THE RIOS ASSASSINATION
ATTEMPT. CAP WILL ATTEMPT TO RALLY THE PUBLIC AND THE

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ELITE IN DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY AGAINST A SUBVERSIVE PLOT;
HE SHOULD HAVE SOME SUCCESS. HOWEVER, ANY SUCH "BOUNCE"
IS LIKELY TO BE SHORT AND BRIEF. THE INCIDENT RAISES
SERIOUS NEW DANGERS FROM AT LEAST TWO DIRECTIONS: THAT THE
BOLIVARIANS AND THEIR COPY-CAT ADMIRERS COULD ACTUALLY
MAKE FURTHER SUCCESSFUL ATTACKS (EVEN A FEW MIGHT BE AN
ALTERNATE "DETONATOR" FOR A COUP); AND, THAT THE GOV MAY
GO TOO FAR IN BLAMING THE LEFT (WHILE SUCCESSFUL THUS FAR,
THAT TACTIC COULD CREATE NEW ENEMIES FOR A GOVERNMENT THAT
ALREADY HAS PLENTY). END SUMMARY

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3. THE FACTS OF THE RIOS SHOOTING (REFTELS) AND ASSOCIATED EVENTS ARE STILL NOT COMPLETELY CLEAR. AT THIS MOMENT, SOME REMAINING QUESTIONS CONCERN THE COMMUNIQUE SENT TO THE MEDIA BY THE ATTACKERS' BOLIVARIAN LIBERATION FORCE (FBL) ORGANIZATION (ALTHOUGH PORTIONS OF THE COMMUNIQUE HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO APPEAR IN THE PRESS), AND THE ALLEGED FBL LIST OF 127 "CORRUPTOS" TARGETTED FOR FUTURE ASSASSINATIONS.

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4. EVEN AFTER WE HAVE THEM, THEY WILL NOT NECESSARILY CLEAR UP WHETHER THE RIOS ATTACK WAS INDEED THE FIRST MOVE IN A PLANNED CAMPAIGN RUN BY A SERIOUS NATIONAL GROUP, OR WAS INSTEAD THE SELF-INFLATED ACT OF A SMALL CELL. NOTHING ABOUT THE RIOS ATTACK IMPLIES (BASED ON CURRENT EVIDENCE) NATIONAL COORDINATION. IT MAY PROVE TO BE SO, BUT IT COULD JUST AS EASILY BE THE LONE-WOLF ACTION OF A HANDFUL OF PERSONS. EARLY INDICATIONS FAVOR THE LATTER POSITION: THAT THE GROUP WAS SMALL AND WITHOUT NATIONAL CONNECTIONS.

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5. IF THE FBL TURNS OUT TO BE REAL, IN THE SENSE OF HAVING THE CAPACITY TO INFLICT FURTHER SUCH ATTACKS, WE ARE IN FOR SOME ROUGH TIMES. VENEZUELAN IN RECENT DECADES HAVE NOT HAD A VOCATION FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE (AS THE JUSTICE MINISTER NOTED RECENTLY TO THE CHARGE, REF A). WEALTHY AND POWERFUL PERSONS HAVE SECURITY SYSTEMS AGAINST COMMON CRIME, NOT AGAINST ASSASSINS. THE SECURITY FORCES THAT COULD PROVIDE SUCH SECURITY ARE NOT (MOSTLY) VERY EFFICIENT, AND ARE STRETCHED THIN BY CURRENT COMMITMENTS. IF THE BOLIVARIANS CAN PUT EVEN FIVE OR SIX TEAMS ON THE STREET, LIKE THE ONE OF CESAR PENA LA CRUZ AND NORMA AZUAJE THAT SHOT RIOS, THEY CAN SPREAD CONSTERNATION IN ELITE CIRCLES HERE. THREE OR FOUR KEY ASSASSINATIONS COULD WORK NEARLY AS WELL AS MASS RIOTS, IN MAKING A "DETONATOR" THAT COULD ENCOURAGE THE GENERALS TO "RESTORE ORDER" TO "SAVE THE PATRIA".

6. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE FBL TURNS OUT TO BE FOUR FRIENDS AND A MOTORCYCLE, WE ARE STILL NOT OUT OF THE WOODS. THE GOV IS WORRIED ABOUT "COPY-CAT" ATTACKS (REF B). VENEZUELAN ARE WILDLY INDIVIDUALISTIC; THIS IS A FACTOR THAT MITIGATES AGAINST TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS AND REVOLUTIONARY ARMIES, BECAUSE FEW WANT TO BE

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FOLLOWERS. BUT VIOLENT ACTS OF INDIVIDUAL "JUSTICE" ARE FULLY IN ACCORD WITH VENEZUELAN PRACTICE. YOUNG VENEZUELAN MEN MAKE GOOD ONE-ON-ONE FIGHTERS. HENCE, EVEN WITHOUT ANY NATIONAL COORDINATION, INDIVIDUALS AND SMALL GROUPS MIGHT SPONTANEOUSLY ATTACK PERSONAL AND POLITICAL ENEMIES, NAMING THEM "CORRUPTOS".

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7. IF EITHER OF THESE TWO SCENARIOS STARTS TO PLAY OUT, THE GOV HAS ALREADY TIPPED ITS HAND ABOUT ITS RESPONSE. WITHOUT WAITING TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, CAP AND HIS KEY MINISTERS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO DENOUNCE A FAR-LEFTIST PLOT AGAINST DEMOCRACY. CAP WILL ATTEMPT TO RALLY ALL DECENT PEOPLE TO ITS DEFENSE. EVEN IN A SOCIETY AS WEAK AND FRAGMENTED AS VENEZUELA'S, SUCH AN APPEAL WILL ATTRACT SOME TO THE GOVERNMENT'S BANNERS. IN THE SHORT TERM, THIS MIGHT BE QUITE EFFECTIVE. WE CAN READILY IMAGINE HOW WELCOME IT MUST BE TO CAP, BESET BY PERSONAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS, TO DECIDE (AND ANNOUNCE) THAT EVENTS CALL FOR A



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REPLAY OF THE 1960'S, WHEN AS A TOUGH-GUY MINISTER OF
INTERIOR HE HELPED CRUSH THE COMMUNIST INSURGENCY.

8. ALL WELL AND GOOD, UP TO A POINT. WE WANT CAP TO
FINISH HIS TERM (ON PRINCIPLE, AND BECAUSE HE IS THE BEST
PRESIDENT CURRENTLY ON THE VENEZUELAN SCENE). SURVIVAL IS
THE FIRST AND ESSENTIAL NEED OF ANY REGIME. DEMOCRACY
NEED HAVE NO SHYNESS ABOUT TAKING THE MEASURES NEEDED TO

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DEFEND ITSELF. WE HOPE, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOV DOES NOT GO
TOO FAR IN A BLAME-THE-LEFT CAMPAIGN.

9. THE GOV IS FUNDAMENTALLY UNPOPULAR, DISRESPECTED, AND
LACKING IN MORAL LEGITIMACY. IN RECENT YEARS, AND
ESPECIALLY SINCE FEBRUARY 4, THE VENEZUELAN POLITICAL
STRUCTURE HAS SHOWN ITSELF UNABLE TO DELIVER POLITICAL
REFORM (HONEST AND COMPETENT GOVERNMENT). WHEN THREATENED
BY REPORTS OF POPULAR REVOLT OR ANOTHER MILITARY COUP, THE
REGIME MADE WIDE PROMISES IN MARCH; AS WE HAVE DOCUMENTED
IN OUR REPORTING, IT DELIVERED ON VIRTUALLY NONE.
CYNICISM IS ALREADY TOO HIGH HERE FOR THE HEALTH OF THE
BODY POLITIC. HOW MUCH HIGHER WILL IT RISE IF, IN THE
END, THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE DO NOT GET CONSTITUTIONAL
REFORM, NOR A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, NOR UNINOMINAL
ELECTIONS, NOR EXEMPLARY PROSECUTIONS OF CORRUPT LEADERS,
NOR IMPROVED PUBLIC SERVICES, BUT DO GET A REPRESSIVE
CRACKDOWN ON LEFTISTS? RED-BAITING WORKS WELL FOR A
WHILE, BUT RISKS IN THE END CREATING THE ENEMY IT

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DECRIES. IF THE SYSTEM CANNOT DELIVER PEACEFUL CHANGE, AND THE ELITE ACCUSES THE LEFT OF BEING CONSPIRATORS AGAINST DEMOCRACY (THAT IS, MANY WILL SAY, AGAINST THE POLITICAL LEADERS NOW RUNNING THE SYSTEM), THE LEFT MAY ACQUIRE A RESPECTABILITY AND FOLLOWING IT HAS NOT HAD HERE IN MANY YEARS.

10. CAUSA R, FOR EXAMPLE, IS AN UNDISCIPLINED PARTY SOME OF WHOSE MEMBERS ARE PROBABLY TALKING TO THE BOLIVARIANS. BUT, AS A WHOLE, THE PARTY IS DEMOCRATIC AND NON-VIOLENT. A GOV DECISION TO BAN CAUSA R, AS PART OF A CIRCLE-THE-WAGONS APPEAL TO DEFEND DEMOCRACY, WOULD BE
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POTENTIALLY A DISASTER. ONE RECENT POLL SHOWS CAUSA R LEADER ANDRES VELAZQUEZ WITH OVER 13 PERCENT NATIONAL SUPPORT. THE FAR-LEFTIST MINI-GROUPS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BOLIVARIANS (TERCER CAMINO, BANDERA ROJA) BY CONTRAST WOULD BE HARD PRESSED TO MUSTER ONE PERCENT POPULAR SUPPORT. WE HOPE THE GOV DOES NOT, IN ITS REACTION TO THE RIOS INCIDENT AND ITS POSSIBLE COPY-CATS, FALL INTO THE ERROR OF LUMPING DEMOCRATIC LEFTISTS WITH THE VIOLENT, MARGINAL FRINGE.

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